United Nations A/ES-10/646–S/2014/551

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
30 July 2014

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-ninth year

Identical letters dated 30 July 2014 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I have been instructed to draw your attention to the most recent horrific incidents of war crimes and State terrorism committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied State of Palestine, in particular in the besieged Gaza Strip, where the humanitarian situation has become catastrophic owing to Israel's destructive and deadly military aggression.

Now in its twenty-third day, this Israeli war against the occupied and defenceless Palestinian civilian population in Gaza continues to cause high civilian casualties and massive human suffering. As at the time of writing of the present letter, at least 1,269 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces, using all means of lethal weaponry and warfare. Among the dead are at least 147 people pulled from the rubble of flattened homes on Saturday, 26 July, during the period of the humanitarian ceasefire.

This immense death toll includes approximately 287 children, along with 141 women and 57 elderly persons. Moreover, it must be brought to the attention of the international community that, from the onset of this barbaric Israeli war, the Ministry of Health has confirmed that the Israeli occupying forces have targeted 52 Palestinian families, brutally killing 285 members of those families. In addition, the number of civilians injured, many severely and permanently, continues to rise. In total, at least 7,110 Palestinians have been injured, including more than 2,164 children, 1,100 women and 282 elderly persons.

We are compelled to convey to you the list below, which includes just a small fraction of the multiple grave violations, many of them amounting to war crimes, committed by Israel, the occupying Power, since our last letter, of 25 July 2014. Some events that occurred prior to our letter, but for which information was not available at the time, have also been included.

14-58532 (E) 070814

Please recycle

On 30 July:

- At least 15 Palestinian civilians were killed and almost 100 wounded when Israeli tanks shelled a United Nations school where 3,300 displaced people were taking shelter in Jabaliya, in northern Gaza. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) confirmed that it had informed Israel 17 times of the precise location of the Jabaliya school in order to ensure its protection and also that it had informed the occupying Power that it was sheltering Palestinian civilians. It should be noted that this marks the sixth time that a United Nations school has been hit by the Israeli occupying forces since 7 July. In a statement today, the UNRWA Commissioner-General, Pierre Krähenbühl, stated the following: "Last night, children were killed as they slept next to their parents on the floor of a classroom in a UN designated shelter in Gaza. Children killed in their sleep; this is an affront to all of us, a source of universal shame. Today the world stands disgraced."
- Further in this regard, as of yesterday, at least five more staff of UNRWA were killed by the shelling and strikes of the Israeli occupying forces.

On 29 July:

- The Israeli occupying forces killed 16 members of the Abu Jabber family, including four children, in the Al-Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza.
- Thirteen members of the Al-Agha family were killed, including four children, by Israeli airstrikes on three homes in Khan Younis, in southern Gaza.
- Israeli occupying forces killed a United Nations doctor and his brother in northern Gaza.
- Israel bombed Gaza's only power plant, which supplies two thirds of Gaza's electricity, putting it out of commission. Regarding the impact on Gaza's already severely damaged electrical grid, the United Nations has already stressed that "the additional reduction in electricity supply is expected to have a pervasive impact on the availability of food and access of people to basic services". Several areas are also now exposed to high public health risks owing to the mixing of sewage with piped water, as a result of unrepaired damages to the networks. It should be noted that prior to the bombing of the power plant, the civilian population in Gaza had already been without electricity for at least 20 hours each day.

On 28 July:

- Ten people, including eight children, were killed; 40 others were wounded by Israeli shelling at a park near the beach in Shati refugee camp in Gaza City. The attack took place while families were sombrely observing the holiday of Eid Al-Fitr, which marked the end of the month of fasting of Ramadan. One of the fathers who had been playing with his children at the park stated: "In the blink of an eye, I found body parts and heads cut off, no arms, no legs. I started to collect limbs, heads I couldn't recognize and I couldn't recognize my own children."

On 27 July:

- Eight Palestinians were killed and several more were injured in Gaza by the occupying forces.
- Israeli occupying forces shelled houses in Al-Salam neighbourhood in Jabaliya, northern Gaza, killing two Palestinians: a 22-year-old man and a 4-year-old child.
- Fourteen Palestinians were injured with live bullets during clashes with the occupying forces in Abu Dis, east of Jerusalem, in the West Bank. Occupying forces also shot a paramedic in the leg with live fire and injured two persons volunteering with the Red Crescent.

On 26 July:

- The bodies of 11 members of the Hilo family were pulled from the rubble of their home in Shejaiya, which had been bombarded by the Israeli occupying forces a week before.
- Shortly before a 12-hour ceasefire came into effect, approximately 20 members of the Al-Najjar family were killed, including 11 children, and many others were wounded when their home was attacked by the occupying forces in southern Gaza. According to reports, they had been trapped inside the home since Thursday.
- Palestinian rescue teams pulled the bodies of 85 Palestinians from under the rubble of homes completely levelled by Israeli shelling across the Gaza Strip.
- Israeli occupying forces heavily shelled Beit Hanoun hospital in northern Gaza, injuring 60 paramedics and patients.

On 25 July:

- Fifteen-year-old Abdullah Alathamna, who had lost his mother, two sisters and a foot when the Israeli military bombed his home in 2006, was injured again by an Israeli attack, suffering shrapnel wounds to the back and leg when Israeli occupying forces bombed his home again.
- Two Palestinians, aged 16 and 18, were killed overnight by live fire from occupying forces during riots in the West Bank in protest against the Israeli military aggression in Gaza.

On 23 July:

- The Palestine Cellular Communications Company announced that Gaza's only cellular telephone network was at risk of going down because of damage done by Israeli bombing.

In addition to the above, as a result of Israel's nearly three-week bombardment against Gaza, the humanitarian crisis, which was already extremely dire owing to Israel's eight-year illegal blockade, has declined to catastrophic levels. More than 240,000 Palestinians have been internally displaced and, of those, more than 180,000 have sought shelter in UNRWA schools. The high number of Palestinians being sheltered by the United Nations amounts to 10 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip and is triple the number of persons who took refuge with UNRWA during Israel's devastating war against Gaza during the winter of 2008-2009.

Yesterday, 29 July, UNRWA spokesperson Chris Gunness warned of the severe strain on UNRWA capacity, stating: "We have reached breaking point with this massive wave of human displacement. This will leave the warring parties, especially the Government of Israel, to assume direct responsibility [for displaced Palestinians]."

Moreover, as of today, 22 hospitals, clinics and medical centres have been directly hit by Israeli fire and the occupying Power continues to target medical staff, including staff travelling in clearly marked ambulances.

While witnessing the horrifying images and testimonies from those on the ground, one cannot but recall many of the observations made by the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict in the aftermath of Israel's so-called "Operation Cast Lead", in 2008-2009, which stated: "While the Israeli Government has sought to portray its operations as essentially a response to rocket attacks in the exercise of its right to self-defence, the Mission considers the plan to have been directed, at least in part, at a different target: the people of Gaza as a whole" (A/HRC/12/48, para. 1883). Tragically, the same can be said of Israel's current war on Gaza.

The international community, including the Security Council, must exert all possible efforts to bring this bloodshed and immense suffering of the Palestinian people to an immediate end and to hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for all of the grave breaches it has committed against the people whose land it occupies. The presidential statement issued by the Security Council on 28 July was an important step, but what is needed now is a strong Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire, the lifting of the blockade on Gaza and the immediate provision of protection for the Palestinian people under occupation. Here, we echo what was said by the UNRWA Commissioner-General in his press statement today: "We have moved beyond the realm of humanitarian action alone. We are in the realm of accountability. I call on the international community to take deliberate international political action to put an immediate end to the continuing carnage."

We urgently appeal to the international community to answer the calls of the Palestinian people under occupation, who are crying out in despair for help, as well to heed to the calls by all those who value the sanctity of human life, including the lives of the Palestinian people and their children. The killing must end. The suffering must end. The siege must end. It is beyond the time for the international community to make good on its promise and take all measures necessary to bring an end to Israel's occupation and all the ills that have become manifest as a result and allow the Palestinian people to live a free and dignified life in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

This letter is in follow-up to our 512 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 25 July 2014 (A/ES-10/645-S/2014/539) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador, Permanent Observer
of the State of Palestine to the United Nations